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NPS Form 10-900 (3-82)

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7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appaarance

Summary Statement

The Swedish American Telephone complex is composed of two distinct mill-construction factory buildings typical of Chicago's industrial architecture of 1890's. The north portion (ca. 1895) as a two-story rectangular building measuring 75' X 96' while the three story 75' X 126' structure to the south (ca. 1900) forms the dominant architectural element. The separate structures were connected by a three-story boller/powerplant addition of 75' X 40' dating from 1901 that completed the building's massing as seen today.

All portions of the building are of timber framed construction with common brick bearing walls sparingly trimmed in either native Joliet stone or Bedford limestone. Multipaned wooden double-hung sash were used throughout and are generally still extant. The exterior is in generally good condition for a building of this type. This is attributable to a limited number of owners during its 90-year history.

North Building

The oldest portion of the Swedish-American Telephone building is the two-story structure at the north end of the site. Its common brick walls rest upon a rubble foundation of Joliet stone divided into 16'-6" bays articulated by pllasters running from grade to the corbelled parapet. The structure of both the second floor and roof framing ars called out by small blocks of smooth dressed Joliet stone at each pilaster on the west and north facades. Within each bay are two window openings per floor containing wooden double hung sash having a light configuration of 4/2. The segmentally arched window heads are composed of two rowlock courses. The sills of the first floor sash have plain faced sills. The corbelled parapet is at present capped with a glazed tile coping and conceals a fist roof.

South Building

This portion of the factory complex consists of three stories and is divided into 16'-0" bays by pilasters extending the full height of the building. As in the two-story portion, the pilasters are highlighted by stone blocks at the level of the second and third floor framing. Unlike the earlier structure, however, these pilasters extend up beyond the line of the parapet and are capped with a glazed coping tile to create a varied profile. Window openings repeat the rhythm established NPS Form 10-900-# (3-82) ONS No. 1024-0018 Expises 10-31-87

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by the north building, yet the 4/2 sash are slightly shorter. The segmentally arched window heads are composed of three rowlock courses and the sills are of smooth Bedford limestone. On the west and south elevations brick is laid at an angle to the wall surface to create a saw-tooth effect in panels between the second and third floors. The top edge of these panels aligns with the parapet of the north building in an effort to unify the two periods of construction. Above the third floor window heads this same brick pattern is formed into lumettes which act to terminate the wall at the parapet level.

Connecting Building

The two northernmost bays of the south building were built in 1901 by Frank S. Betz & Co. to connect the earlier two story structure to the newer three story building. Although dstailed in a manner identical to that used on the facades of the south building, the 20'-0'' bay size is longer and reflects the infill nature of this portion of the factory.

Interior

The interior spaces throughout the factory are indicative of the functional requirements of their industrial use. The large double hung sesh admit ample light even at the middle of the building. A post and beam structural system is used throughout all three portions of the complex with variations occurring only in regard to the type of spanning members. The older two story building utilizes beams composed of individual members laminated together. Beams of this sort were employed when large timbers were unavailable or prohibitively expensive. The laminated beams are used in conjunction with angle braced columns in order to reduce the structural span to acceptable limits and to building is framed in conventional heavy timber mill construction.

Alterations

Relatively few alterations have been made to the building. Some sash and doors have been removed and the openings filled with glass block or brick, but these changes are reversable. Fire escapes were added at the north and south elevations early in this century. The masonry has been repointed and the original parapet coping was replaced in the early 1950's. At the same time lannon stone cladding in a random ashlar pattern was added to the recessed entry at the southwest corner. NPS Form 10-800-4 (3-82) ONB No. 1024-0018 Sepires 10-31-87

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Architect

The authorship of the north building is not known. The south building is probably attributable to Irving W. Kelley, the architect of the 1901 addition because of the close replication of the south building's west facade in the addition. Kelley joined Frank S. Betz in partnership for a brief period in 1895, but appears to have maintained his architectural practice at least through 1909. During this period the majority of his commissions were for industrial buildings.

The Swedish American Telephone Company Building is one contributing structure.

8. Significance

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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Architecture

The Swedish-American Telephone Company possesses all of the characteristics of the heavy timber framed mill building built in Chicago during the late 1890's. Constructed of simple materials, common brick and timber frame, its architectural expression reflects the fundamental architectural requirements of daylighting, high structural capacity and economy of construction that typify industrial buildings of this era.

However, the Swedish-American Telephone Company differs from contemporary industrial buildings in several important respects. The common brick exterior walls not only express the structural system within but also exhibit significantly more concern for facade composition than the standard industrial building of the day. The sequence of pilasters on the exterior walls establishes a rhythm that brings the three building complex into a unified whole. Moreover, above the third floor the brick is fashioned into decorative lumettes which combine with the aparing use of limestone to create a building that reveals a certain pride of owmership. The skillful and effective way in which these simple materials are than was typical of outlying industrial buildings.

From the time that it was constructed the complex has been owned by its occupants. These have been few in number and maintenance has never been neglected. The result is a structure that is surprisingly intact for an industrial building of its age. Most of the alterations that have taken place, such as the blocking in of windows, are reversible so that restoration is feasible.

Industry .

Each of the three industries housed in the factory complex prospered and became significant in its field. The Betz Co. quickly outgrew the building on East Ravenswood Park moving to larger facilities in Hammond, Indiana within four years of completing the complex. It went on to become a major manufacturer and distributor of hospital and physicians supplies with worldwide distribution. NPS Form 10-900-a (3-62)

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The Swedish American Telephone Company was a major supplier of telephone parts and apparatus through 1923 when it was purchased by Stromberg-Carlson. During its tenure in the complex many inventions and improvements were made to the squipment that the firm supplied to the telephone industry. The reputation of this and other Swedishowned companies for high-quality products enabled them to remain a vital part of the electronics industry until it came to be dominated by the Japanese in the 1960's.

For many years, the Denoyer-Geppert Co. enjoyed s dominant role in the manufacturing of high quality maps and charts for educational use. The pull-down maps familiar to many from school days were produced in the factory on East Ravenswood Park. Life-sized models of human organs and skeletal parts were manufactured for use in instructing medical students and full-color lithographic plates depicting subjects that ranged from micro-biology to the planetary orbits were made by skilled artists and printers drawn from the surrounding area. Modern film and video teaching aids eventually made many of Denoyer-Geppert's products obsolets and led to its ultimate absorption by long-time rival Rand-McNaily in 1984.

All of these companies have played an important role in the economy of the Chicago region and in the economy of the Andersonville community in particular. Owners like Betz and Gullborg resided a short distance from their plant on East Ravenswood Park. The complex has always employed a significant number of neighborhood residents. At the time that it ceased operation, over 40% of the Denoyer-Geppert work force walked to work.

Social

In addition to its architectural and industrial significance the Swedish-American Telephone Company building has played an important role in the social development of the Andersonville Community. As the first large industrial building to be built in the neighborhood it pre-dates all but a few of the homes and social institutions in the area. The successful businesses it has housed established an acconomic base for the developing community and have provided employment for skilled workers of first German and subsequently Swedish origins for nearly 90 years.

Situated between the railroad and the residential neighborhood to the east, the factory served as a physical barrier separating the noise and dirt of steam locomotives from the homes beyond. This NPS Form 10-900-a

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pattern was followed by many succeeding industries resulting in the creation of an industrial "corridor" flanking the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad that is still visible for several miles along Ravenswood Park. It is perhaps worthy of note that the success of the Swedish-American Telephone Company had symbolic as well as economic import to the Swedish community in Andersonville. It demonstrated that personal gualities such as inventivenees, industriousness, and perseverance were more important than one's ethnic background. This had great significance to the seventy-eight percent of Chicagoane who were either foreign born or the children of foreign born by 1900.

The Development of the Andersonville Community

In 1868 the Ravenswood Land Company purchased 194 acres along the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks and in 1869 began to sell lots.

Initially the railroad made stops only at Roachill Cemetary to the north and at Ravenswood to the aouth, where growth centered around Wilaon Avenue and the tracks. In 1875 the railroad inaugurated a stop at Summerdale and a atation was built on East Ravenswood Park 100 feat west of the present location of the Swedish-American Telephone Company building. By 1890 the land on which it would stand had been plotted as a part of the Summerdale station of Summerdale and was owned by Samuel C. Wagar who listed his occupation as "metaphysician". The addition of the Summerdale station accelerated the growth of the area and as lots were subdivided and sold, Scandinavian names began to appear in increasing numbers, eventually outnumbering the original settlers who were predominantly German. It is during this period that the factory was built and then expanded.

The area immediately to the east was known as Andersenville after one of the original Norwegian settlers. As the population became increasingly Swedish the "e" became an "o" and the community became Andersonville reflecting the ethnic shift. As the Swedish population grew in numbers, Andersonville's boundaries expanded on all sides from its center at Clark Street and Foster Avenues. The western boundary reached East Ravenswood Park displaced Summerdale in popular usage.

This area is now officially included in the Edgewater neighborhood of Chicago which encompasses all of past and present Andersonville. Swedish influence is atill much in evidence in the area, particularly along Clark north of Foster where numerous Swedish restaurants and shops can be found. NPS Form 10-809-8 (3-62)

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F. S. Betz Co. (1895-1905)

Frank Betz was born in Eau Claire, Wisconain on June 11, 1861 to German-born parants. In 1887 he came to Chicago and found work as a moldar and by 1891 had become a partnar in the real estate firm of Stevenson, Bookar & Betz. In 1893, Betz opened his own real estate office in the Loop. Unfortunately, this coincided with a major recession in the ragion and real estate activity was at a standstill so, in 1895, he embarked on a new career as a manufacturer and marketer of "vapor baths". At last he appears to have been succeasful as an advartisement of 1896 claims "over 6,500 bath cabinets sold to physicians" and boasted a shownoom on State Street. Within a few years, Frank Betz had begun to manufacture cabinsts in the factory on East Ravenswood Park using cabinetmakera from the neighborhood which was still predominantly German.

In 1899, the Frank S. Betz & Co. diversified into "physicians supplies and hospital apparatus", and required expanded facilities for manufacturing and warehousing. It is at this time that the large three-story portion of the building was built. In 1901 an addition uniting the two existing buildings was constructed, completing the block and creating a complex that extended 266 feet along East Ravenswood Park from Pine to Walnut Streets. This is the final form of the building as it stands today.

The madical supply business flourished and Betz & Co. continued to expand until by 1904 they had outgrown the complex on Ravenswood. Rapid development of the adjacent reaidential community had left no room for further expansion of the Andarsonville factory so that Betz was forced to relocate his firm to a new plant in Hammond, Indiana where industrial sites were plantiful.

The company built a new factory and continued to prospar in the years following the relocation. Frank S. Betz appears in the City Blue Book of Chicagoans of 1914 as a Director of the First National Bank and boardmember of several firms in addition to presiding over his own company. By 1927 the "Betzco Line" of medical supplies had opened showrooms in New York and Dallas in addition to that they built at 634 South Wabash in Chicago. They published a comprehensive catalog and did a large mail order business with physicians world-wide.

The Swedish-American Telephone Company (1905-1923)

In 1894 the patents protecting the manufacture of telephone devices expired leading to the founding of hundreds of small companies NPS Form 10-800-8 (3-82) ONB NO. 1024-0018 Expires 10-31-87

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seeking to obtain a share of the expanding market for telephons components. Much of the technical expertise required by the burgeoning telephone industry was supplied by men of Swedish descent whose prior experience with Sweden's more advanced telephone system was invaluable and some of them seized the opportunity to enter business for themselves.

The Swedish American Telephone Company was one such company. Founded by John S. Gullborg, a Swedish-born inventor and manufacturer, snd Ellsworth Overshiner, and operator of telephone exchanges, the company was one of several Swedish owned telephone companies that would rise to prominance on the phenominal popularity of the telephone.

At the time, virtually all of the manufacturers of telephone equipment sold their products to those few companies which held the local monopoly on telephone service. In Chicago this was the Chicago Telephone Co. and the majority of the Swedish-American Telephone Company's production was sold direct to the Chicago Telephone Company.

The telephone supplies made here sre sold mostly to the Chicago Telephone Company which has practically a monopoly of the telephone business hereabouts through its access to the entire Bell Connection.1/

By 1905 the Swedish American Telephone Company was one of five major suppliers to the telephone business here and required larger quarters to increase its production capacity. It found them in the building on East Ravenswood Park that The Betz Company had recently vacated. The firm manufactured "electrical apparatus of every character pertaining to the telephone business."2/ Its employees were drawn primarily from the neighborhood which by this time were predominantly Swedish.3/

In 1902, John Gullborg sold his interest in the firm and joined the competing Stromberg-Carlson Company as Master Mechanic. This firm had been founded in 1895 by Alfred Stromberg and Andraw Carlson who were Swedish-born technicians themselves. In 1903, within eight years of its founding, the firm was sold to Eastern Industrialist for \$10,000,000.00, guite a large sum at that time.

3/ Local Community Fact Book of the Chicago Mstropolitan Area, p. 193.

^{1/} Chicago, The Book of its Board of Trade, 1900, p. 230.

^{2/} The Swedish Blue Book, p. 30.

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Following the sale of the Stromberg-Carlson Company, the three men formed another partnership to manufacture parts for rapidly sxpanding automobile industry. In combination, they developed the Stromberg carburetor which achieved world-wide use and remained a visble patent into the 1960's. J. S. Gulborg left this partnership to found the Allemite Die Casting Co. in 1910. His invention of sophisticated die casting machinery gave the firm unique capabilities which ensured its success and it remains in business today.

All three men remained socially active in the Swedish Community. John S. Gullborg became president of the Swedish Enginer's Society and in 1920 arranged the purchase of the Dewes Mansion at 503 West Wrightwood Street which is now designated a Chicago landmark.

Denoyer-Geppert Co. (1923-1985)

The Denoyar-Geppert Co. moved into the complex in 1923. They produced high-quality maps and charts as well as anatomical and biological models, globes, and film strips for educational use. As the firm grew it acquired other property in the arsa until it occupied all of the industrial buildings for three consecutive blocks along East Ravenswood from Foster Avenue to Summerdale Street.

Denoyer-Gappert remained in the building until the firm was purchased by Rand-McNally in 1984. The Complex now stands vacant for only the third time since its construction, awaiting the fourth tennant in its 90-year history.

It is at this juncture that we seek to place the building on the National Register. It is our hope that this will encourage future owners to preserve its architectural integrity so that it may remain a vital and historically significant part of the community that it has helped to create.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #

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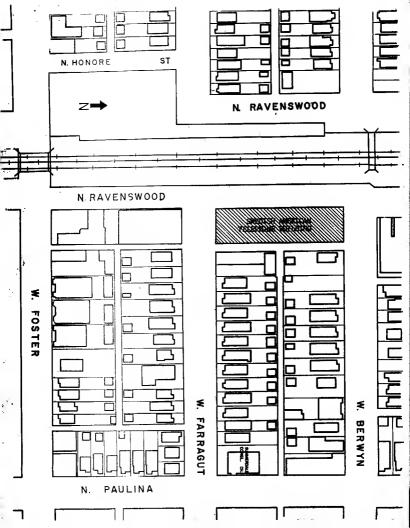
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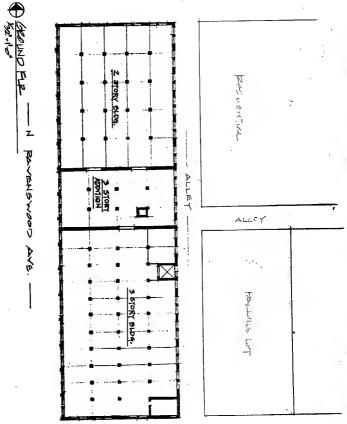
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GEORGIA, Union County, Blairsville, Union County Jail (County Jails of the Georgia Mountains Area TR), Blue Ridge Rd. (09/13/85)

GEORGIA, White County, Cleveland, White County Jail (County Jails of the Georgia Mountains Area TR), Main St. (09/13/85)

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